## THE LION'S SHARE

**OCTAVE THANET** 

CHAPTER VIII .- Face to Face. CHAPTER IX .- The Agent of the Fireless Stove.

Copyright by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

## CHAPTER VIII.

When the two men got into the house the dim rooms made them stumble for a moment after the brilliant sunshine of the outer skies; but in a second Birdsall's groping hand had found an electric push-button and the room was flooded with light. They were in a small office off the kitchen, apparently. Smoke of a neculiarly pungent in a small office off the kitchen, apparently. Smoke of a peculiarly pungent odor and eye-smarting character blurred all the surroundings, but during the moment the Jap halted to explore its cause the others perceived two doors and made for them. One was locked, but the other must have been free to open, since Haley, with his watering can, bounded through it while they were tugging at the other. Almost immediately, however, Haley was back again shouting and pointing down the dark passage.

dark passage.

"The fire's there," screamed the detective. "I can smell smoke! The smoke comes through the keyhole!" But while the Jap fitted a key in the lock and swung back the door, and Haley, who had paused to replenish his watering can at a convenient faucet. Haley, who had paused to replenish his watering can at a convenient faucet, darted after the other two, the colonel stood listening with every auditory nerve strained to catch some sound. He yelled "Firel help!" at the top of his voice, but not moving a muscle. "Too far off," he muttered, then he yelled again and threw a heavy chair as if he had stumbled against it. Another pause; he got down on his knees as if he had stumbled against it. Another pause; he got down on his knees to put his ear to the floor. Directly he rose; he did not speak, but the words that he said to himself were only: "Just possible. Some one down celler; but not under here." Meanwhile he was hurrying in pursuit of the others as swiftly as his stiff knee would allow. He found them in a side hall with tiled or brick floor, gathered about a water-souled heap of charred red paper.

a water-soaked heap of charred red paper.

"Tis terrible!" announced Haley,
"a bum for sure! a dinnermite bum!"
—fishing out something like a tin tomate can from the sodden mass.

"Anyhow, there goes the real thing,"
observed the colonel coolly, as a formidable explosion jarred the air.

"If you blow us un. I kill you first!"
hissed the Jap, and his knife flashed.

"Chite, Chite!" soothed the colonel,
lifting his revolver almost carelessly.
Simultaneously two brawny arms pinioned the Jan's own arms at his sides.

"Shure, Mister Samurai, "tis the ongrateful chap youse is," expostulated
Haley. "I hate to reshtrain ye, but grateful chap youse is." expostulated Haley. "I hate to reshtrain ye, but if ye thry any jehujits on me 'twill be sahanara wid youse might quick."

"No understan" murmured the

"No understan," murmured the Jap plaintively. "Why you hult me?" "Come, put out the fire first," said the colone!, "you know the house, you make about?"

The Jap darted on ahead so swiftly that they had some ado to follow, which

that they had some ado to follow, which seemed necessary, since he might have clashed a bolt on them at any turn. The colonel's stiff leg kept him in the rear, but Haley was never a hand's breadth behind the runner.

They found smoke in two places, but they easily extinguished the tiny flames. It both cases the bombs turned out to he no more dangerous than a common kind of fireworks yielding a suffocating smoke in an inclosure, but doing no especial damage on safe and fireproof ground, like a hearth. They were quickly extinguished. In their search they passed from one luxurious room to another, the Jap leading, until he finally halted in a spacious library hung in Spanish leather, with ancient, richly in Spanish leather, with ancient, richly carved Spanish tables and entrancing Spanish chairs of turned wood and age-mellowed cane, and bookcases sumptuously tempting a book-liver. But the colonel cared only for the soul of a book, not its body; the richest and clearest of black letter or the daintiest clearest of black letter or the daintiest of tooling had left him cold; moreover, every fiber in him was strung by his quest, and Haley, naturally, was immune; strangely enough, it was the cheerful, vulgar little detective who gave a glance, rapid but full of admiration, at the shelves and pile of missals on the table, incongruously jostled by magazines of the day.

Winter faced the Jap, who was sheathed again in his bland and immassive noliteness. "Where is Mr.

passive politeness. Mercer? said he. "Where is Mr. The Jap waved his hands in an elo-

quent oriental gesture. He assured the honorable questioner that he did not know any Mr. Mercer. There was no the house.

one in the house.

The colonel had sented himself in a priceless arm chair in Cordova stamped leather; he no longer looked like an invalid. "Show your star, please," he commanded Birdsall, and the latter silently flung back the lapel of his coat.

"I ought to tell you," continued Rupert Winter, "that the game is up. It would do no good for you to run that poisoned bit of steel of yours into me or into any of us; we have only to stay. nto any of us; we have only to stay here a little too long and the police of San Francisco will be down on you—oh, know all about what sort they are have money to spend as well You take the note I shall write to Mr. Mercer, or whatever you choose to call him, and bring his answer. We

Having thus spoken in an even, genevice, he scribbled a few words a piece of paper which he took out his notebook. This he proffered to

the Jap.
On his part, the latter kept his self-respect: he abated no jot of his assurance that they were alone in the house; he insinuated his suspicion that they were there for no honest purpose; finally he was willing to search the house if they would stay where they were

'I am not often mistaken in neonle " "I am not often mistaken in people," was the colonel's rather oblique answer, "and I think you are a gentleman who might kill me if you had a chance, but would not break his word to me. If you will promise to play fair with us, do no harm to my nephew, take this letter and bring me an answer—if you find any one—on your word of honor as a Japanese soldier and gentleman, you may go; we will not

word of honor as a Japanese soldier and gentleman, you may go; we will not signal the police. Is it a bargain?"

The Jap gravely assented, still in the language of the east, "saving his face" by the declaration of the absence of his principals. And he went off as gracefully and courteously as if only the highest civilities had passed between them.

"Won't he try some skin game on us?" the detective questioned, but Winter only motioned toward the telephone desk. "Listen at it." he said, "you

production of his red moreceo notebook and his fountain pen. He had paused in disguest when the colonel sat up suddenly, erect in his chair; his keener ears had caught some sound which made him dart to all the windows in succession. He called Haley (whom he had posted outside to guard the door) and dispatched him across the hall to reconnoiter. "I am sure it was the sound of wheels," he explained, "but Haley will be too late; we are on the wrong side of the house."

As he spoke the buzz of an electric

As he spoke the buzz of an electric bell jarred their ears. "Somebody is coming in the front door," hazarded Birdsall.

"Evidently," returned the colonel dryly. "How can our absent friends get in otherwise—at least how can they let us understand they have come in? I think we are going to have the pleasure of an interview with the clusive Mr. Mercer." Mr. Mercer.

Mr. Mercer."

They waited. The colonel motioned Birdsall to a seat by the table, within breathing distance of the telephone. He himself fluttered the loose journals and magazines, his ironic smile creasing his cheek. "Our Japanese friend reads the newspapers," he remarked. "Here are today's papers; yes, Examiner and Chronicle, unfolded and smoked over. Cigar, too, not cigarette, for here is a stump—decidedly our cherry-blossom friends are getting civilized!"

'Oh, there is somebody in here all right," grunted Birdsall. "Say, colouel, you are sure Mrs. Winter has had no answer to her ad.? No kind of notice about sending money?"

'I haven't seen her for a few hours, but I saw Mrs. Melville Winter; she was positive no word had come. She thought my aunt was more worried than she would admit and Miss Smith looked pale, although she seemed hopeful."

she would admit and Miss Smith looked pale, although she seemed hopeful."
"She didn't really want to give me the letter, I thought," said the detective. The colonel gave him no reply save a black look. A silence fell. A footfall outside broke it, a firm, in no wise stealthy footfall. Birdsall slipped his hand inside his coat. The colonel rose and bowed gravely to Cary Mercer.

On his part, Mercer was not in the least flurried, he looked at the two men, not with the arrogant suspicion which had stung Winter on the train, but with the melancholy courtery of his bearing at Cambridge, three years before.

'This, I think, is Colonel Winter?' he said, returning the how, but not extending his hand, which hung down, slack and empty at his side.

'I am glad you recognized me this time, Mr. Mercer.'

'I am sorry that I did not recognize you before, answered Mercer. 'Will you gentlemen be seated? I am not the owner of the house nor his son; I am

owner of the house nor his son; I am not the owner of the house nor his son; I am not even a friend, only a casual acquaintance of the young man, but I seem to be rather in the position of host, so will you be seated, and may I offer you some Scotch and Shasta—Mr.—sh—"?

'Mr. Horatio Birdsall, of the Birdsall "Mr. Horatio Birdsall, of the Birdsall & Gwen Detective agency." interposed Winter. Birdsall bowed. Mercer bowed. "Excuse me if I decline for us both; our time is limited—no, thank you, not a cigar, either. Now, Mr. Mercer, to come to the point, I want my nephew. I understand he is in this house."

"You are quite mistaken." Mercer responded with unshaken calm. "He is not."

"Where is he, then?"

"Where is he, then?"
"I do not know, Colonel Winter.
What I should recommend is for you to
go back to the Palace and if you do
not find him there—why, come and
shoot us up again!" His eye strayed
for a second to the blackened, recking

for a second to the blackened, recking mass on the great stone hearth.

"Have you sent him home? Is that what you mean to imply?"

"I imply nothing, colonel; I don't dare to with such strenuous fighters as you gentlemen; only go and see, and if you do find the young gentleman has had no ill treatment, no scare—only a little adventure such as boys like, I hope you will come out here, or wherever I may be, and have that eigar you are refusing."

The colonel was frankly puzzled. He couldn't quite focus his wits on this

couldn't quite focus his wits on this bravado which had nothing of the bravo about it, in fact had a tinge of wistfulness in its quiet. One would have said the man regretted his com-pulsory attitude of antagonism; that he wanted peace.

Mercer smiled faintly, "You ought to know by this time when a man is lying, colonel," he continued, "but I will go further. I may have done plenty of wrong things in my life, some things, maybe, which the law might call a crime; but I have never done anything which would debar me from passing my word of honor as a gentleman; nor any one else from taking it. I give you my word of honor that I have meant sud I do mean no slightest harm to Archie Winter; and that, while I do not know where he is at this speaking, I believe you will find him safe under your aunt's otestion when you get back to the

"Call up the Palace hotel, Mr. Birdsall," was the colonel's reply. "Mr. Mercer, I do not distrust that you are speaking exactly, but you know your Shakespeare; and there are promises which keep their word to the ear but break it to the sense.

"I don't wonder at your mistake; but

"I don't wonder at your mistake; but you are mistaken, suh."

Birdsall was phlegmatically ringing up Mrs. Winter, having the usual experience of the rash person who intrudes his paltry needs on the complex workings of a great hotel system.

'No, I don't know the number, I haven't the book here, but you know, Palace hotel. Well give me information, then—Busy? Well, give me another information, then—yes, I want the Palace hotel—Palace-yes, ves, Palace hotel; yes, certainly. Yes? Mrs. Archibald Winter Yes—line busy? Well, hold on until it is disengaged. Say, Miss Furber, that you? This is Birdsall & Gwen. Yes. Give me Mrs. Winter, will you, 337? This Mrs. Winter? Oh! When will she be back? Is Mrs. Melville Winter in? Well, Miss Smith in? She's gone, too? Has Master Archibald got bee's gone, too? Has Master Archibald got beefer. Mrs. Melville Winter in J. Well, Miss. Smith in? She's gone, too? Has Master Archibald got back, vet, to the hotel? Hasn't? Thank you—eh?'' in answer to the colonel's interruption.

answer to the colouel's interruption.
"What say, colonel?"
"Tell her to call up this number"—
the colonel read it out of the telephone
book—"when Master Archie does get
back, will you? I am afraid, Mr. Mercer, that you will have to allow us to
trespass on your hospitality for a little longer."

He supported that Nr.

in, under their very noses, he could issue his orders—well, possibly they might get a whiff of the secret themselves were he allowed to try. At present the game buffled him. Therefore he nodded, at Birdsall's puckered face behind Mercer's shoulder. And he rang the bell. The Jan answered it with applications. The Jap answered it with suspicious

cer's shoulder. And he rang the bell.

The Jap answered it with suspicious alacrity.

"Kito." said Mercer, "will you attend to General Winter's car? Bring it up to the court."

Absolutely harmless, to all appearances, but Birdsall, from his safe position behind master and man, looked shrewd suspicion at the soldier.

"Shall your man in the hall go with him?" asked Mercer.

The colonel shook his head. "No," he said quietly, "we have other men outside if he needs help. Call Skid, please." But when Birdsall attempted to get Central there was no response.

The colonel mercly shrugged his shoulders, although Birdsall frowned with vexation. "What a pity!" said Winter softly. "Now the fellows will come when the time is up; we can't call them off."

Mercer smiled faintly, "There are two most steleobores in the heuse." he

call them off."

Mercor smiled faintly, "There are two more telephones in the house," be observed. "You can call off your dogs easily any time you wish. Also you can hear from the Palace. Will you come upstairs with me? I assure you I have not the least intention to harm you or the honest sergeant."

I have not the least intention to harm you or the honest sergeant."

"You take the first trick, Mercer." said the colonel. "I supposed the bell was your signal to have the wires cut. But about going; no. I think we will stay here. There is a door out on the court which, if you will open—thank you. A charming prospect! Excuse me if I send Haley out there; and may I go myself?"

Anticipating the answer, he stepped under the low mission lintel into a fairly-like Californian court or patio

Anticipating the answer, he stepped under the low mission lintel into a fairly-like Californian court or patio of pepper trees and palms and a moss grown fountain. There was the usual colonnade with a stone seat running round the wall. Mercer, smiling, motioned to one of them. "I wish I could convince you, colonel, that you are in no need of that plaything in your hand, and that you are going to dine with your boy—isn't he a fine felhand, and that you are going to dine with your boy—isn't he a fine fel-low?'

The colonel did not note either his admission that he had seen Archie, nor a curious warming of his tone; he had stiffened and grown rigid like a man who receives a blow which he will not admit. He stole a glance at the detective and met an attretious smirth of comtive and met an atrocious smirk of complacency. They both had caught a glimpse of a figure flitting into a door of the court. They both had seen a woman's profile and a hand holding a little steel tool which had ends like an alligator's nose. And both men had recognized Miss Smith.

## CHAPTER IX.

The Agent of the Fireless Stove. The time was two hours later. Ru-

ert Winter was sitting on one of the tone benches of the colonnade about be patio. The court was suffused with the patio. The court was suffused with the golden glow presaging sunset. Warm afternoon shadows lay along the flags; wavering silhouettes of leafage or plant; blurred reflections from the bold bas-reliefs of Spanish warriors and Spanish priests sculptured between the spandrels of the arches. Winter's dull eyes hardly noted them: the exotic luxuriance of foilage, the Spanish armor and Spanish cowls were all too common to a denizen of a Spanish colony in the tropics, to distract his thoughts from to a denized of a Spanisa colony in the tropics, to distract his thoughts from his own ugly problem. He had been having it out with himself, as he phrased it. And there had been moments during those two hours when he had ground his teeth and clenched his fists because of the futile and furious because of the futile and furious

when he recognized Janet Smith, by When he recognized Janet Smith, by that same illuminating flash he recognized that this woman who had been tricking him was the woman that he loved. He believed that he had said his last word to love, but love, after seeming to accept the curt dismissal, was lightly riding his heart again. "Fooled a second time," he thought with inexpressible bitterness, recalling his unhappy married life and the pretty, weak creature who had caused him such humiliation. Yet with her there had been no real wrong-doing, only absolute lack of discrettion and a childish craving for gaiety and adulation. Poor for gaiety and adulation. Poor d! what a woeful ending for it all! baby, the little boy who was their only living child, to die of a sudden access of an apparently trifling attack of croup, while the mother was dancing at a post ball! He was east, taking his examination for promotion. The frantic examination for promotion. The frantic drive home in the chill of the dawn had given her a cold which her shock and grief left her no strength to resist—she was always a frail little creature, poor butterfly!—and she followed her baby inside of a month. Had she lived her husband might hear found it heal her husband might have found it hard to forgive her, for already a sore heart was turning to the child for comfort; but she was dead and he did not let his thoughts misuse her memory. Now-here was another, so different but just as false. Then, he brought himself up with a jerk; he would be fair; he would look at things as they were; many a look at things as they were; many a man had been fooled by the dummy. He would not jump at conclusions be-cause they were cruel, any more than he would because they were kind. There was such a thing, he knew well, as credulous suspicion; it did more harm than credulous trust. Meanwhile he had his detail. He was to find Archie therefore, he waited. They were in the house; it were only folly to give up their advantage under the stress of any of Mercer's plausible lurings to the

outside.

Moreover, by degrees he became convinced that Mercer, certainly to some extent, was sincere in his profession of belief in Archie's absence and safety. This, in spite of hearing several times that Archie was not returned. Mercer did all the speaking, but he allowed Birdsall to hold the receiver and take the message from Mrs. Winter. The telephone was in an adjoining room, but by shifting his position a number of times the colonel was able to catch a murmur of the conversation. He heard Mercer's voice distinctly. He had turned away and was following the had turned away and was following the detective out of the room. "I don't understand it any more than you do. Mr. Birdsall," he said, "you won't believe me, suh, but I am right worried."

worried."
"Of course I believe you." purred
the detective so softly that the colonel
knew he did not believe any more than
Mercer suspected. "Of course I be-

tion struck a wavering mind with the force of an argument. His thoughts reverted whimsically to the card table, how many times had he hesitated over the first lead between evenly balanced suits of four; and how often had he regretted or won, depending solely upon whether his card instinct had been denied or obeyed! It might be instinct, this much discussed "card instinct," or it might be a summing up of logical denity of the summing up of logical denity of the summing up of logical denity. this much discussed "card instinct," or it might be a summing up of logical deductions so swift that the obscure steps were lost, and the reasoner was unconscious of his own logical processes. "Now," groaned Rupert Winter, "I am up against it. She looks like a good woman, she seems like a good woman, but I have only my impressions and Aunt Rebecca's against the apparent facts in the case. Well, Aunt Rebecca is a shrowd one!" He sat down and thought harder. Finally he rose, smiling. He had threshed out his problem; and his conclusion, inaudibly but very distinctly uttered to himself, was: "Me for my own impressions! If that girl is in with this gang, either what they are after isn't so bad—or they have made her believe it isn't bad."

He looked idly about him at the

He looked idly about him at the arched doorway of the outer court. It was carved with a favorite mission design of eight-pointed flowers with a vaselike fluting below. There was a tiny crack in one of the flowers, the tiniest crack in the world. He looked at it without seeing it or seeing it. at it without seeing it, or seeing it with only the outer half of his senses, but—he could not have told how—into his effort to pierce his own tangle there his effort to pierce his own tangle there crept a sudden interest, a sudden keenness of scrutiny of this minute, insignificant crack in the stone. He became aware that the crack was singularly regular, preserving the form of the flower and the fluting beneath. Kite, the Japanese, who was sitting at the far end of the court, conversing in amity with Haley, just here rose and came to this particular pillar. The Irishman sat alone, rimmed by the sunset gold, little spangles of motes drifting about him; for the merest second Winter's glance lingered on him ere it went to the Jap, who passed him, courteously saluting.

After he had passed, the colonel looked again at the column and the crack—it was not there.

crack—it was not there.
"Chito, chito!" muttered the colonel. Carelessly he approached the column and took the same posture as the umn and took the same posture as the Jap. Unobtrusively his fingers strayed over the stone. He scratched the surfact: not stone, but cement. He tapped cautiously, keeping his hand well hidden by his body; no bellow sound rewarded him, but all at once his groping fingers touched a little round object under the bold point of an eight-pointed flower. He didn't dare press on it; instead he resumed his cautious tapping. It seemed to him that the sound had instead he resumed his cautious tapping. It seemed to him that the sound had changed. He glanced about him. Save for Haley he was alone in the patio. He pressed on the round white knob, and what he had half expected happened: a segment of the column swung on inner hinges, disclosing the hollow center of the engaged columns on either side. He looked down. Nothing but darkness was visible, but while he stood, tensely holding his breath, his abnormally sensitive aurfeular nerve caught distinctly the staccate breath of that kind of a sigh which is like a grean, and a voice said more wearily than angrily: "Oh, damn it all!"

Almost simultaneously, he heard the faint footfalls of the men within; he must replace his movable flower. The column was intact, and he was bending his frowning brows on the stylobate of another when Birdsall and Mercer en-

column was intact, and he was bending his frowning brows on the stylobate of another when Birdsall and Mercer en-tered together, Mercer, with a shring of his shoulders at the detective's dog-

of his shoulders at the detective's dog-ged suspicion, preceding the latter.

"Well," said the colonel. "Did you get my aunt?"

"Yes, suh, I got your aunt herself," responded Mercer, with his Virginian survival of the formal civility of an earlier generation. "Yes, suh; but I regret to say Archie is not there."

"Where is he?" The soldier's voice was curt.

was curt.

"Honestly," declared Mercer, "I wish I knew, sub, I certainly do. But

"Mercer's jaw fell; be turned sharply at the soft whir of an electric stanhope gently entering the patio through the great arched gateway. It stopped abreast of the group, and its only occupant, a bandsome young man, jumped out of the vehicle. He greeted them with a polite removal of his cap, a bow, and a flashing smile which made the circuit of the beholders. Birdsall and the colonel recognized the traveling enthusiast of the Fireless Stove. The colonel took matters into his own

hands.
"I think you're the gentleman who

took my nephew away," said he. "Will you kindly tell us where he is?" "And don't get giddy, young gentleman," Birdsall chimed in, "because we know perfectly well that you are not the agent of the Peerless Fireless Stove." Stove

"I've got one here on trial, and I've come back to see if they like it," explained the young man, in silken accents, but with a dancing gleam of the "We are going to keep it," said Mer-

eer. "Kito," calling the unseen Jap, "fetch that Fireless Stove this gentleman left us, and show it to this gentle

man here."

"Oh, cut it out!" Birdsall waved him off, "It's only ten minutes before our fellows will come. You can put the police court wise with all that. Try it on them; it don't go with us."

"Where is the boy?" said the colored. "Tell him, if you know," said Mer-er. "This gentleman," he explained, 'left a stove with us to test. He was

here about it this morning, and we gave Archie to him to take to the Palace "And he is there now," said the

"Did you leave him there?" asked the colonel. "'Yes, did you?" insisted Mercer.
The young man looked from Mercer

to the other two men. There wa visible appeal to the Southerner, Winter felt sure of two things: that the newcomer was Mercer's There was no

that the newcomer was Mercer's confederate whom he was striving to shield by pretending to disavow; the other, that for some reason Mercer was as anxious for the answer as were they.

"Why-y," hesitated the stove promoter, "you see, Mr.—ah, gentlemen, you see, I was told to take the boy to the Palace hotel, and I set out to do it. We weren't going at more than a neight-mile an-hour clip, yet some foozler of a cop arrested us for speeding. It was perfectly ridiculous, and I tried to shake him, but it was no use. They carried us off to a police court and stack me for ten dollars. Meanwhile my machine and my passenger were outside. When I got outside I couldn't find them. I skirmished around, and finally did get the machine. I'd taken the detective questioned, but Winter only motioned toward the telephone deak. "Listen at it," he said, "you can tell if the wire are cut; and he knows your men are outside hiding, somewhere, he doesn't know how many. You see, we have the advantage of them there; to be safe they don't dare to let many people into the receiver. We can have a whole gang. We haven't many, but they may think me the sar, laid it down with an appeased not. Immediately he proceeded to satisfy his professional conscienate by a starch in every nook and cranny of the apartment. But no result application of the program of the processing the peared important enough to justify the state of the processing the peared important enough to justify the state of the content of the peared in the telephone deak. "Cit course I believe you, purred the detective so softly that the colonel he has so offly that the colonel lacenically the detective so softly that the colonel he who had not believe any more than hoved. Although he answered lightly cought to don't show what to do. It is not the map, I guess it's up to the show how the don't have you up that how the time your marking the supervision of the police out and the whole you the softly ridiculous, and I tried to shake him, but it was no use. They the whole you the soft two shake him, but it was no use. They carried us off to a police court and he cought to shake him, but it was no use. They the whole you the tow what to do shake him, but it was no use the whole the colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically an every now, but they what to do shake him, but it was no use the whole the whole the colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought the colonel lacenically the cought the colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought the colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought the colonel lacenically the cought. The colonel lacenically the cought the colonel l

hoed, it occurred to me to 'phone to the Palace. I did, and I was told he was there."

"Who told you?" The guestion came simultaneously out of three throats.

"Why, Mrs. Winter-that's what she called herself."

"Why, Mrs. Winter—that's what she called herself."

"But not three minutes ago Mrs. Winter told me that he wasn't there," remarked Mercer coldly. "When did you telephone?"

"It was at least fifteen minutes ago," the young man said dolefully. "I say, wouldn't you better call them up again? There may be some explanation. I shouldn't have come back without the kid if I hadn't been sure he was safe."

"Was it Mrs. Melville or Mrs. Winter you got?" This came from the colonel. "Did she by chance have an English accent, or was it Southern?"

"Oh, no, not Southern?"

"Oh, no, not Southern?"

"It would be exactly like Millicent." thought the colonel wrathfully, "to try to fool the kidnapers, who had apparently lost Archie, by pretending he was at the hotel!"

He made no comment aloud, but he nodded assent to Mercer's proposal to telephone; and then he walked up to the stove man.

"The game is up," he said quietly. "We have a lot of men waiting outside. If we signal, they will come any minute; if we don't signal, they will come in ten minutes. Give us a chance to be merciful to you. This is no kind of a scrape for your father's son—or for Arnold's."

Shot without range though it was, Winter was sure that it went home under all the young fellow's assumed be wilderment. He continued, looking kindly at him:

"You look new, I'll wager, about as you need to leake in the efficience.

kindly at him:
"You look now, I'll wager, about as
you used to look in the office when you called on the dean-by invitation-and

called on the dean—by invitation—and were wondering just where the inquiry was going to light!"

The dimple showed in the young man's cheek. "I admit." he replied, "that I didn't take advantage as I should of my university opportunities. Probably that is why I have to earn a strenuous livlihood boosting the Only Peerless Fireless Stove. By the way, have you ever seen the Fireless in action? Just the thing for the army! Fills a long-felt want. I should be very pleased to demonstrate. We have a stove here."

The colonel grinned responsively. "You do it very well," said he. "Can't you let me into the game?" There was the slightest waver in the promoter's glance, although he smiled brilliantly as he answered: "I'll take it into consideration, but will retain

orninantly as he abswered: 'I'll take it into consideration, but—will you excuse me? I want to speak to Mr. Mercer about the stove.''

The moment he had removed his af-

fable young presence Birdsall ap-proached his employer. It had been a difficult quarter of an hour with the detective. Vague instinct warned him not to touch the subject of Mss Smith; he felt in no way assured about anything else. The result had been that he had fidgeted in silence. But the accumulated flood could no longer be held. 'I've found out one thing," exploded

Birdsall, puffing in the haste of his utterance. "The boy is on the premises,"
"Think so?" was all the colonel's

"Think so?" was all the colonel's answer.

"I'm sure of it. Say, I overheard Mercer talking down a speaking tube."

"What did he say?"

"Talked French, damn him! But say, what's 'gorge'?"

"Throat."

"What's 'cupillo gorge'?"

"Sure he wasn't talking of a carriage, or did he say 'je le couperai la gorge'?"

"Maybe. I wouldn't swear to it. I don't parlez Francais a little bit."

"Did you hear any other noises? Where were they?"

Birdsall thought he had heard other noises, and that they were down cellar.

"And anyhow, Colonel, I'm dead-torights sure those guys are giving us het

orights sure those guys are giving us hot stuff to get us out of the house. I'm for getting our men in now and rushing the house. It's me for the collar."

While the colonel was rolling Birdsall's information around in his mind, he heard the echo of steps on the flag-ging which preceded Mercer and the other man.

man. There was that in the bearing and the look of them that made the watcher, used to the signs of decision on men's faces, instantly sure that their whole course of plans and action was changed Mercer spoke first and in a low tone to the colonel. "I have no right," said he, "to ask

so much trust from you, but will you trust me enough to step uside with this young man and me for a moment only out of earshot? I give you my word of honor I mean no slightest harm to you. I want to be frank. I will go alone if you desire? you desire. The colonel eved him intently for the

The colonel eved him intently for the briefest space. "I'll trust you," said he. Then: "I think you have the key to this queer mixup. At your service. And let your friend come, too. He is an ingenious sort, and he amuses me." Birdsall looked distinctly sullen over the request to wait, intimating quite frankly that his employer was walking into a trap. "I won't stand here more than fifteen minutes." he grumbled. "I've given those fellows poco tiente than fifteen minutes,' he grambled.
'I've given those fellows poco tiente long enough.' But the colonel insisted ou twenty minutes, and Birdsall nequiesced. Mercer conducted the others to the library. When they were seated he be-library. When they were seated he betwenty minutes, and reluctantly

gan in his composed, melancholy fashion:

"I earnestly beg of you to listen to me, and to believe me, for your nephew's sake. I am going to tell you the absolute truth. It is the only way the new you came, we handed him

the absolute truth. It is the only way now. When you came, we handed him over to this gentleman, exactly as we have said. I do not know why he should have been stopped. I do not know why he left the machine—'' 'Might he not have been carried away?' said Winter.

"'He might; but I don't know what movive—''

"What motive had you? You kidnaped him!" We had no intention 'Not exactly. We had no intention of harming him. He came accidentally into the room between Mrs. Winter's and Mr. Keatcham's suites. Standing in that room, trying to stanch the bleeding of a sudden hemorrhage of the vose,

he overheard me and my friend—''
''You'' asked the colonel laconically
of the young Harvard man.
''I,' smilingly confessed the latter.
''I am ready to own up. You are a
decent fellow, and you are shrewd. You
ought to be on our side, not fighting
us. I tell you, you don't want to have
the how turn up safe and sound are



well enough to trust him then—although he might, for he is game and the whitest chap!—but we didn't know—why, we just told him he would have to stay with us a while until our rush was over. That was all we meant; and we let him 'phone you.''

"How about his greataunt—the cruel "Apxiety nothing!" began the other man, but a glance from Mercer cut him

short.

The Southerner took the word in his slow, gentle voice. "I tried to reassure our aunt, Colonel Winter. I think I succeeded. She telephoned and I told her it was all right. As for Archie, after we talked with him, he was willing enough to go. He stole out with my friend inside of five minutes, while you were searching your rooms. It was he were searching your rooms. It was he who insisted on calling you up, lest you should be worried. He said you were right afraid of kidnapers, and you would be sending the police after us. You can call Mrs. Winter up and find out if I am not telling you the exact facts."

"Very well, I will," said Winter. They met the sullen detective at the door. Cary Mercer, with his mirthless smile, led the way. Mercer rang up the hotel for Winter, himself. To the colonel's vast relief Aunt Rebecca an-

colonel's vast relief Aunt Rebecca answered the call.

"Est-ce que c'est vouse-meme, mon neveu?" said she dryly.

"Mais oui, ma tante. Why are you speaking so formally in foreign tongues? Is Millicent on deck?"

"In her room," came the answer, still in French. "Well, you have got us in a pretty mess. Where "is my boy?"

"I only wish I knew! Tell me now.

'I only wish I knew! Tell me now, though, is Mercer's story straight?''
'Absolutely. You may trust him.''
'What's his real game, then? The one he was afraid Archie would expose?'

Ask him." "But you are in it, aren't you?"
"Enough to ask that you abandon the chase—immediately! Unless
wish to ruin me!!!
"You'll have to speak plain."

"You'll have to speak plain, been kept in the dark as long as stand in this matter."

But before he could finish a tence: "Pas ici, pas mainteautrop de peril," she cried, and as have gone, for he could get in from her. When he rang amid dall responded:
"Mrs. Winter says, sir, all please come up here as quick as-

"Mrs. Winter says, sit, all please come up here as quick as a She's gone out. She thought the sight of Mr. Archie on the stret. To the colonel's demand, how did she see him?" he obtainswer, and on his vicious pair the bell there came, eventually a Anglican accents which asset; "I evidence of the undisciplined to the sex that the soldier make." the sex that the soldier made a and—hung up the receiver. He found himself—although the

really open mind is no excess muddle of conflicting impulses, on edge to get into the street search after the boy; he was in a vise by his conviction that to Archie's whereabouts lay a cer's hands, and that the Son meant no harm to the lat. And while he could feel Birdsall tun the leash.

the leash.

'It's on the cards," he me
with a wry face, "quite on the
that he may bolt in spite of a
do some foolish stunt of his or do some foolish stunt of his on will make a most awful middle. Not nearly so composed as it therefore, he turned to Mercer, ever, his ammunition was read, a Mercer's inquiry, was he saide replied calmly: "Well, not extine Archie isn't in the house, who whose throat you wish to cut?" It could not have been an user.

It could not have been an user question or Mercer hardly to swered so readily; "You know is," said he. "It is Mr. Keakle

Quaker Maid Rye Awarded Three Gold Medals "The Whiskey 1904 RECEIVED HIGHEST AWARD AT Louis World's Pair, 1905; Paris Pure Food Industrial Exhibition, 1905; Lewis and Cark Exposition, Portland, Oregon, 1905

EVERYBODY'S MONEY

comes our way. We collect it, then it comes your way. Our discovery bright red streaks of honesty exist in everybody coins more dollars for clients than some gold mines.

We recently collected for all of the following firms and individuals may know some of them.

Bingham Cons. Mining and Smelting co. Dooly block, city. E. C. McGarry, life insurance agent, S. C. Slaughter, retired merchant, 675 So. 5th East, city. David Wolf, tailor, Templeton bldg.

S. HIRSCH & CO.

Clarence Gardner, Afton. Wyo.
Robert B. Lewis, the coal man, Ogen. Utah.
Sugar House Merc. Co., Sugar House, Utah.
Startup Candy Co. Provo, Utah.
Beesley Music Co., city.
Utah Light and Railway Co., city.
Murray Merc. Co., Murray, Utah.
Mrs. Sarah Hart Harms, 970 W. 2nd South, city.

Mrs. Sarah Hart Harms, 970 W. 2nd jouth, city.
Alexander Optical Co., city.
Gordon Art Co., art dealers, Citroielle, Ala.
J. E. Salisbury, Richfield, Utah.
E. H. Stevenson, clear seller, 270 W.
So. Temple, city.
Dr. F. H. Lay, 1652 State st., city.
J. G. Giles, general store, Garfield.
Utah.

Bianchard & Gorman, saloon, Evans-



Kansas City, Mo.

We will collect some for you, if you turn in your claims.

Merchant's Protective Association Scientific collectors of honest debts, 9 rooms Commercial National Bank B Salt Lake City, Utah. Francis G. Luke, General Manager. 'Tis s "Some people don't like us."